



NEBRASKA REPORT

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UNITED STATES SENATOR • NEBRASKA

The Meaning of Memorial Day

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As we take vacations, work around the yard or just spend time with our families, it is important that we take a moment to reflect on the reasons that Americans celebrate Memorial Day.

A bruised and battered, but united, America began honoring its military dead after the Civil War on "Decoration" Day and continued the tradition until Congress in 1971 officially declared a national holiday and renamed it "Memorial" Day. Regardless of its name, Americans have recognized for almost 150 years that we should set aside a day to honor the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice to preserve our freedom.

On this day, in this millennium year, we should remember that not one of the men and women who have died to protect America have died in vain. A war hero turned President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, once said that, "If all Americans want is security they can go to prison. They'll have enough to eat, a bed and a roof over their heads. But if an American wants to preserve his dignity and his equality as a human being, he must not bow his neck to any dictatorial government." This principle - that freedom does not come without a price -- is fundamental to American democracy. And it is the reason that we appreciate and honor those who gave their lives to preserve our way of life.

Most Americans live everyday with an unconscious mantle of freedom that was bought and paid for by patriots lost in the pursuit of peace around the world. As we enjoy our Memorial Day, let us appreciate the freedoms that we have because of those who have died to pay for them.

This year, for the first time, a national effort will be made to observe a national "moment of remembrance" at 3:00 p.m. local time on Memorial Day. I introduced a concurrent resolution

in the United States Senate which encourages an annual observance of this moment of

remembrance with prayer and the playing of “Taps.” The resolution passed the Senate unanimously on May 25, and an identical version passed the House of Representatives on May 22.

The purpose of setting aside this moment from now on is to help restore the recognition our veterans deserve for the sacrifices they have made on behalf of our great nation and to bring all Americans together in a spirit of respect, patriotism and gratitude. By observing this moment and by appreciating the freedoms that we enjoy throughout the day, it is my hope that we can put the ‘memorial’ back in Memorial Day.

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